

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4687

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS MR UK PO
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE DIVERSION OF LOANED MACHINE GUNS

REF: (A) LISBON 1460, (B) LONDON 3881, (C) LONDON 2379

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF BOCA INVESTMENTS LTD., JOHN RALPH AND TWO LAWYERS REPRESENTING ITS NY LEGAL COUNSEL, GERALD BARANDES AND MITCHELL RABBINO, CALLED ON EMBASSY JUNE 8 REGARDING THE SUBJECT CASE. THEY RECOUNTED AT LENGTH SEQUENCE AND DETAILS OF THE TRANSACTION AND THEIR EFFORT TO INITIATE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST SOGNALIAN HAD TAKEN THEIR MONEY, BUT WOULD NOT MAKE GOOD ON THE DELIVERY OF THE MACHINE GUNS TO THE MAURITANIANS.

2. THE TWO LAWYERS STRONGLY URGED EMBASSY INVOLVEMENT WITH GOP DEFENSE OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES WHO MIGHT SHED ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON THE TRANSACTION. WE LISTENED SYMPATHETICALLY TO THE PRESENTATION, BUT INFORMED THEM THAT EMBASSY IS IN NO POSITION TO INTERVENE IN CASE AT HAND, OR TO EXERT PRESSURE ON POTENTIALLY INVOLVED GOP AGENCIES OR LOCAL PRIVATE FIRMS.

3. ARMA, WHO WAS PRESENT AT ABOVE MEETING, TOLD VISITORS
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THAT INFORMATION THEY SEEK COULD PROBABLY ONLY BE OBTAINED FROM MAURITANIAN AUTHORITIES OR THROUGH OFFICES OF A PORTUGUESE LAWYER. ARMA CONFIRMED THAT STORY TOLD HIM BY SOGNALIAN IN LATE 1977 WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME TOLD THEM. ARMA SUBSEQUENTLY MADE CONTACT WITH PORTUGUESE ARMY AND DETERMINED THAT OFFICIAL RECORDS SHOW NO MACHINE GUNS HAVE LEFT OR TRANSITED PORTUGAL THROUGH SOGNALIAN'S HANDS

OR THROUGH AVITEXTIL,HIS AGENT COMPANY IN LISBON.

4. COMMENT: ARMA SUSPECTS SOGNALIAN SOLD BOCA HIGH PRICE U.S. GUNS, BUT ATTEMPTED TO SUBSTITUTE THEM WITH CHEAPER PORTUGUESE ITEMS. HE PRESUMABLY FAILED BECAUSE AVITEXTIL PROBABLY COULD NOT GET THE EXPORT LICENSE REQUIRED TO MOVE ARMS FROM MILITARY ARSENAL TO SOGNALIAN AIRCRAFT. END COMMENT.

5. THE LAWYERS FOR BOCA INVESTMENTS, LTD. SUGGESTED THEY MIGHT DECIDE TO TAKE UP THE CASE WITH INTERESTED WASHINGTON AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE DEPT., IN EFFORT TO OBTAIN FURTHER ASSISTANCE ON PART OF EMBASSY LISBON. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT INFORMING EMBASSY IF SUCH APPROACH IS MADE.
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